UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.121
26 January 1994

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 121st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 21 January 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BADRAN

CONTENTS

Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)

Romania (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.94-15276 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 5) (continued)

Romania (continued) (CRC/C/3/Add.16; and CRC/C.5/WP.5)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to continue its consideration of the replies of the Romanian delegation to the section entitled "General principles" in the list of issues (CRC/C.5/WP.5).

2. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that the rights of children belonging to the gypsy community (Roma minority) were of particular concern. The Government of Romania was, after all, the Government of all citizens, including gypsies, and it should help them to overcome their increasing isolation and dispel the atmosphere of hostility. In many countries, a lack of understanding of gypsies and their culture fostered discrimination against them. One had to look no further than Germany where in recent racist attacks some of the first victims had been Romanian gypsies. He asked what the Romanian authorities were doing to change anti-gypsy attitudes.

3. In such a climate of hostility and anti-gypsy sentiment, the gypsy community felt that its concerns were not being taken seriously by the authorities, which, it believed, were actually supporting violence against it. From all appearances, not enough was being done in Romania to help the gypsy minority. It was alarming that approximately 50 per cent of gypsy children of school age dropped out of formal education and that gypsy children were grossly over-represented in children's homes and institutions. The Amnesty International Report 1993 and the country reports on human rights practices for 1992, submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate by the Department of State had both condemned the situation of gypsies in Romania.

4. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasized that no group of people or children should be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic origins. Children from ethnic and linguistic minorities should not be deprived of their right to their own cultural life, religion and language. Gypsies themselves could not be blamed for the education problems within their community. It was wrong to accuse parents of depriving their children of an education without recognizing the fact that they were afraid to send their children to school. The root causes of their fear and the risks they believed their children were running by attending school needed to be determined before any positive action could be taken.

5. The Romanian authorities should emphasize training programmes for teaching staff, focusing on how to relate to and deal with children from ethnic groups and other cultures. Neither children nor their parents should be forced into having to make the choice between assimilation (and forgetting their cultural identity) and marginalization. Most gypsy parents were illiterate, so efforts targeted at the community and family levels should be made to help them understand how their children could benefit from an education. She asked whether anything had been done in that regard.

6. It seemed that the gypsy community had begun to form organizational structures in Romania. A Federation of Romanian Gypsies (FER) had been set up and moves had been made towards political organization among minority groups. The time had come to start a fruitful dialogue, using those structures as a vehicle for change. The FER had already been successful in promoting education in some regions of Romania. Such initiatives were essential to help the gypsy population escape from a situation in which they were forced into the most lowly jobs, usually as unskilled labour, were the first to lose their jobs and accounted for the poorest sectors of society. Minority communities could only be freed from that vicious circle through education and by involving them in decision-making processes. As Romania was currently engaged in decentralizing many aspects of such processes, it should try to ensure that minorities were represented at all levels, especially at the local and community level, thus helping them to integrate into society. She asked for information on the stage reached in the project in Romania to establish a national advisory board on educational reform which offered another opportunity of involving gypsies and minorities in areas of particular concern to them.

7. In Gypsies in Europe compiled by UNICEF, it had been stated that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of children in Romania were gypsies and that 80 per cent of gypsy children were in institutions of some sort. She asked for an explanation of the reasons behind such a high percentage and of the nature of the institutions.

8. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) said that the situation of the gypsy community in Romania was under consideration not only at the government level but also in all departments and ministries. A concerted effort had been made with regard to compiling statistical data on the situation of gypsies. It had been found that 4 per cent of gypsy children had gone through secondary education, 40 per cent of eight-year olds attended school intermittently, approximately 20 per cent of gypsy children had never attended school and that there was a drop-out rate of 15 per cent among gypsy children.

9. Unfortunately, there were no schools specifically for gypsies; they were, however, free to attend other schools. Special schools had been set up for other minorities, including Czechs, Slovaks and Bulgarians. There was no doubt that it was important for gypsy children and other minorities to receive a good education to help them to integrate into society. He had no personal knowledge of teachers displaying a hostile attitude toward gypsies, although he could not discount the possibility.

10. The Ministry of Education had approved special classes for gypsies at all levels of pre-university education, including teaching in the Romany language, to help children preserve their ethnic identity. Unfortunately, however, there was a shortage of trained staff and materials and there were difficulties in drawing up a curriculum for gypsies as very few teachers came from the gypsy community itself.

11. At university level, 10 places had been set aside especially for gypsy students for the 1993-1994 academic year. For some months, work had been under way on the preparation of a special curriculum on the Romany language and literature. A first edition of a Romany dictionary was also nearing completion.

12. Following the violent demonstrations in some villages of Romania, the Ministry of the Interior had dealt severely with law enforcement officers who had failed to keep public order or had been slow to intervene in order to defuse a tense and potentially explosive situation.

13. The gypsy community was beginning to establish political organizations. Six political parties represented it in Parliament, both in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and it boasted 42 other organizations. However, although contact had been established with it, success had been limited. In general, a resolute attempt was being made to solve the problems of ethnic minorities and further measures would be taken to ensure that the Government of Romania was in a position to protect all its citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin.

14. Mrs. LAUDATU (Romania) said that the new Council on National Minorities had begun work in conjunction with governmental and non-governmental organizations. There were many gypsy children in Romanian institutions, and it was hoped that a pilot project would be set up in the near future to assess how many gypsy children between the ages of 0 to 3 years and 3 to 18 years had been institutionalized in children's homes. UNICEF was providing assistance to Romania in its attempts to reunite those children with their natural families, or if that was not possible, to place them with families at weekends and during holidays.

15. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that the Romanian authorities should also turn their attention to formulating a consistent and rigorously implemented policy to prevent discrimination against gypsies in the labour and housing markets. There should also be a concerted effort to prevent the media from using terms and descriptions that might encourage prejudice against gypsies or other minorities. Above all, the authorities should demonstrate, beyond doubt, that they strongly opposed violence against gypsies, whether by law enforcement officers or private individuals, and they should ensure that the guilty parties were brought to justice. Only then would minorities be provided with proof that judicial and political authorities had their best interests at heart and were trying to help them overcome their feelings of alienation, which inevitably had an adverse effect on children.

16. Miss MASON said that the studies on the education of gypsy children and the plan to compile a dictionary were commendable and asked whether the Romany language had its own alphabet.

17. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that the intention of the Romanian Government to redefine its policies on gypsies was very welcome. In such policies education was fundamental as a means of preventing discrimination and of changing attitudes towards minorities. The Council on National Minorities must include representatives of the minorities so that they could state their problems; it was also important for teachers to be properly informed, for a fundamental aim

of the Convention was to ensure that people understood that the existence of diverse cultures could be a source of enrichment for the society. The training courses in human rights and the rights of the child described in the documents should include a course on the prevention of incitement to hatred, violence and racism. Since the role of the media in reporting on such matters was not entirely positive, minorities should also be represented on the relevant regulatory bodies.

18. Mr. KOLOSOV asked how the birth registration system operated in the case of gypsies.

19. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) said that the Romanian delegation was grateful for all the recommendations made by members of the Committee. He would personally bring them to the attention of the Prime Minister and all relevant government organs.

20. In response to specific points raised, he said that the birth registration system was the same for all citizens, including members of minority groups. There were radio and television broadcasts for many minorities but none for gypsies. Gypsies were in fact the guardians of part of Romania's folk music heritage and appeared daily on television. However, they should have their own television programmes in which their specific social problems could be discussed.

21. He would discuss with the Ministry of Education the question of setting up Romany-language schools and Romany-language classes in regular schools, so that gypsy children would be able to maintain their ethnic identity. There was no discrimination in the health insurance system, and minorities had exactly the same rights and access as other citizens at all levels. He would discuss with the Labour Ministry the possibility of introducing vocational training for members of minorities. He believed that the Romany language was written in the Latin alphabet. It might be noted that, as the gypsies were generally practising Christians of the Greek Orthodox faith, the churches might have a useful role to play in future activities. Clearly, much remained to be done in the difficult task of integrating minority groups into society while protecting their ethnic traditions and identities.

22. The CHAIRPERSON drew attention to the section of the list of issues entitled "Civil rights and freedoms" issued in document CRC/C.5/WP.5 which read:

"Civil rights and freedoms

(Arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a) of the Convention)

1. What concrete steps are being taken to encourage the publication, dissemination and availability to all children of children's literature?

2. How are children protected from violence and harmful influences in the mass media?

3. Please indicate steps taken to ensure that corporal punishment is not used in schools or other institutions for children. Are there complaint procedures against such violations and could they be used also by children themselves?"

23. She said that Romania had provided information in response to the three questions, but members of the Committee wanted more information on the issue raised in question 3.

24. Mr. MOMBESHORA asked whether the information about the Convention available in schools was provided for teaching purposes or for the children themselves to read.

25. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether, in the light of the considerable rethinking which had taken place in Romania since 1989, any new textbooks for teachers had been published.

26. Mrs. EUFEMIO asked whether, in view of the difficulty of publishing school books, there were any other means of making literature available to children, for example in television or radio programmes or through libraries and through reading centres for children in rural areas.

27. Miss MASON asked whether children were able to exercise in practice the right to address requests or complaints to the committee for the protection of minors, as described in paragraph 69 of the report. She would also like to know whether children actually exercised their constitutional right to express their views in the family. She noted that before the change of Government all Romanian children had been able to exercise the right of association in pioneer camps. She would like to know whether the youth councils which had superseded the pioneer camps were really able to reach all children and cater to their needs.

28. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that she would like more information about the status of the committee for the protection of minors and, in particular, whether it exercised independent supervision of children's institutions and could consider complaints from children objectively. She would also like to know whether children could make complaints about corporal punishment in private so that their future treatment in the institution would not be prejudiced. Furthermore, was there machinery for periodic review of the placement and treatment of children in institutions, as stipulated in article 25 of the Convention? The dignity of the child must always be respected, and corporal punishment never permitted. She would like to know what kind of sanctions were taken against persons inflicting corporal punishment on children and what publicity was given to such sanctions in order to prevent further violations.

29. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) said that textbooks were being published for teachers and children, and works of classical Romanian literature and story-books were also issued for children. Unfortunately, most young children preferred watching television to reading books. The school publications included textbooks for primary and secondary education and more advanced works on arts and science subjects. All schools had libraries, and public libraries were available in all towns. Villages usually had "community libraries",

which children could use free of charge. The pioneer camps had in fact been replaced by a variety of youth organizations which were trying to reach all children.

30. Mrs. LAUDATU (Romania) said that she could add on the latter point that children were beginning to set up their own organizations, and there was already a large number of bodies organizing activities for children.

31. With regard to the right of children to complain to the committee for the protection of minors, the Government was currently considering legislation spelling out the spheres of competence of the committee and other children's and educational bodies in hearing such complaints and assessing whether children were able to exercise the right. Children could take legal action in the courts on their own behalf from the age of 14. Rules did exist for the periodic review of the situation of children in institutions but they were not always respected in practice. The Romanian authorities, in conjunction with some NGOs, were devising a project to tackle the problem, especially the situation of disabled children placed in institutions. The usual sanction for use of corporal punishment was dismissal and a ban on future work with children. No special publicity was given to such action at present, but it would clearly be a good idea to do so.

32. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS welcomed the acceptance on the part of the Romanian delegation of the need for change and improvements in the system. However, she wondered whether the penalties applied for corporal punishment were commensurate with the gravity of the offence committed. Was there a clearly defined scale of penalties under criminal law that would not only preclude the possibility of any arbitrary treatment, but might also act as a deterrent against the use of corporal punishment?

33. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) said that supervisors, teachers or other staff employed in educational establishments who were found guilty of corporal punishment were dismissed and not allowed to re-enter the teaching profession. Corporal punishment which caused serious injuries was classified as a criminal offence.

34. Mrs. LAUDATU (Romania) said that children were being given greater opportunities to express their views in society and the family. However, in Romania traditional family values were deep rooted and it was normally parents who decided on important issues regarding their children.

35. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) added that a child's trade or occupation was usually chosen by its parents. Moreover, in Romania's essentially Latin culture, it was the wives rather than the husbands who took important decisions concerning their children.

36. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation of Romania to reply to the remaining issues raised by the Committee concerning the family environment and alternative care, which read:

"5. What measures are taken to protect the child against abuse and maltreatment within the family as laid down in article 19 of the Convention? What research is undertaken into the problem of ill-treatment and sexual abuse of children, including into social factors which influence such violations? What procedures exist for intervention by the authorities in cases where a child needs protection from serious abuse within the family? Can children lodge complaints concerning abuse or neglect?

6. Please describe in more detail plans and programmes for providing institutionalized children with a real possibility to move to parents or other homelike circumstances. What is the attitude of the authorities in relation to further cooperation with non-governmental organizations in this area?

7. What further steps have been taken to support and educate personnel at institutions for children? What is done to avoid that decentralization of authority in relation to these institutions does not deprive them of resources?

8. How far has the education and training programme for social workers developed?

9. Please describe implementation difficulties in relation to the new legislation and procedures regarding adoption. What is the present official position towards intercountry adoptions and what measures are taken to prevent adoptions violating the standards of the Hague Convention on protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoptions?

10. Are efforts made to respond to incorrect information in foreign media in relation to the situation of children and their availability for adoption?"

37. Mr. OPROIU said that in general there was a very good family environment in Romania since the family remained an important nucleus of society. Families were usually very close-knit and parents took an interest in their children's problems and education. After the age of 18, and even after marriage children looked to their parents for spiritual and material assistance. Romania had adequate legislation to protect its children. For instance, under article No. 306 of the Penal Code the penalty for parents or guardians who placed at risk the physical, intellectual and moral development of a child was a one- to five-year prison sentence. Moreover, children who were the victims of abuse or ill-treatment by members of their family or their guardians were protected by the committee for the protection of minors in accordance with Act No. 3 of 1970. Children who were neglected by their parents were placed in institutions with or without parental consent. The tutelary authority was responsible for the way in which parents exercised their rights and fulfilled their obligations vis-à-vis the child and its property. The penalty for parents who mistreated their children ranged from forfeiture of their parental rights to imprisonment. Where cases of physical or psychological abuse were detected, priority was given to punishing the adult and providing adequate medical assistance for the child-victim.

Children could lodge complaints of abuse or negligence with the tutelary authority, the committee for the protection of minors, the police or their teachers. However, there were major problems because of the absence of specialized social services to deal with the victims of such abuse and the lack of reliable information on the subject.

38. Under the provisions of Act No. 3 of 1970, there were four categories of children that could be placed in institutional care. The first category was made up of orphans, with no next of kin able to look after them; the second comprised children whose health or physical, moral or intellectual development was at risk in the family. Such children were placed in crèches, schools or other institutions according to their age, the maximum being 21 years. If the circumstances which determined their institutionalization changed, the children could be placed in family care. Applications for the placement of children in State institutions had increased over the last two years due to the economic situation. In such cases, the placement was regarded as temporary and the children concerned maintained contact with their families. Some non-governmental organizations had set up pilot schemes to return such children to their families and had achieved some degree of success. Furthermore, the child allowance provided by the State was index-linked and there were hopes that it would be one way of reversing the trend towards institutional care of children on economic grounds.

39. The third category of children for which the State was responsible consisted of the severely handicapped who were cared for in special homes between the age of 3 and 18 and nursing homes equipped with workshops after the age of 16. Severely handicapped children could only return to their families at the latter's request, addressed to the committee for the protection of minors. Legislation enacted in 1992 provided that children classified as first degree invalids could be cared for in their own homes by qualified staff paid for by the State. At present, 10,000 children in Romania received such care. The alternative for such children was family care in a homelike environment but such schemes were not yet operational.

40. The fourth category comprised young offenders who were likely to commit similar offences or to encourage the spread of vice or immoral behaviour among other minors were sent to special re-education centres after the age of 10. At present there were two such centres in Romania, one for girls and one for boys with 254 and 245 interns respectively.

41. It was difficult to reconcile the increasing number of applications for intercountry adoption with the provisions of the relevant legislation in force (Act No. 11/1990) which had been revised in 1991. It was often the case that neither the applicants nor the parents of the child to be adopted would agree to the conditions laid down by the law. As a result, pressures were mounting within the country and from abroad to facilitate intercountry adoption. Those concerned claimed that the revised legislation violated basic human rights by restricting parents' freedom of choice and denying children the possibility of being brought up in a more comfortable environment. There had also been cases where judges had approved intercountry adoptions without the necessary documentation from the Romanian Adoption Committee (CRA), which should certify that a suitable placement had not been found for the child in the six months since the Committee had taken up the case. Under the provisions of Act No. 11

of 1990 such documentation must be attached to the application for adoption. Appeals against the decisions of the Romanian Adoption Committee had also been lodged by some parents on the grounds that they had been denied the right to decide on the future of their own children. Despite such problems, the stance taken by the Government was primarily to ensure the upbringing and education of the child in its own family; the child was only eligible for adoption when the family would not or could not ensure its upbringing. As far as the Romanian Adoption Committee was concerned, it was in the best interests of the child to maintain a link with its native country and normal environment. For that reason, national applications took precedence over those from abroad. The new legislation had had positive results with the number of intercountry adoptions decreasing considerably since its entry into force. Moreover, in the meantime public opinion in Romania had rallied in favour of its children and there had been a considerable increase in the number of national applications for adoption.

42. Mrs. SARDENBERG noted that the Romanian Family Code dated from 1954. Paragraph 88 of the report (CRC/C/3/Add.16) referred to studies being carried out into the situation of women and children; she inquired whether there were any plans for specific programmes to address family issues. Furthermore, she asked whether any activities were planned in connection with the International Year of the Family such as the dissemination of information and holding of meetings on family problems.

43. With regard to adoption, she sought additional information regarding the bill referred to in paragraph 122 of the report, which, in the current period of transition she feared might not have the desired effect, unless accompanied by adequate enforcement measures.

44. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that the situation of mothers was a key factor in the life of children and expressed concern regarding women who shouldered a heavy burden in Romanian society. Unemployment among women and abortion rates were currently very high in Romania. The ill-treatment of women was closely linked to the abuse of women which seemed widespread in Romania and was not confined to any particular social classes. Greater attention needed to be paid to protecting women's rights especially within the family; that would not be easy in such a male-dominated society, particularly on the political scene. In general he stressed the vital role of social workers in improving the situation of children and hoped that the Government would provide greater support so as to enable wider and better training.

45. He welcomed the efforts made to place children in families rather than in institutional care, but stressed that attitudes must be changed towards the mentally and physically handicapped. It was not enough to increase the salaries and numbers of staff in such institutions; the Government must realize that institutional care was not the best solution even for the handicapped. Moreover, he was concerned that as a result of the decentralization of such structures resources for child-care would be depleted.

46. As to the problem of adoption, he stressed that legislation alone would not suffice, but vigorous steps should be taken to ensure its proper implementation for despite efforts made so far, reports indicated that

unacceptable forms of intercountry adoption were likely to increase. He hoped that the Government would take a firm stance, particularly since intercountry adoption was a lucrative business and there had already been a good deal of misinformation in the foreign media. Romania could rely on international support to counter negative propaganda, but its Government must also make an effort to protect its children.

47. Mrs. EUFEMIO firstly sought clarification regarding the right to appeal against decisions concerning adoption, particularly since the delegation had indicated that Romanian candidates had priority over couples from abroad. Moreover, she was concerned by the emphasis laid on the importance of the financial circumstances of the adoptive family. Surely, there were other more important factors to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, she inquired whether there were any programmes to encourage prospective parents to adopt children from institutions. As to the procedures for intercountry adoption, she understood that they were regarded as having been completed after the child had resided for one year in the country of adoption. Which entity was responsible for monitoring the situation of the adopted child living abroad after that period of time had elapsed? Lastly, she inquired what treatment was given to ensure the physical and psychological well-being of children following long periods in institutional care.

48. Mr. MOMBESHORA asked whether the public was encouraged to report cases of child abuse in the family in view of the current shortage of social workers responsible for such activities.

49. Miss MASON reiterated the question she had asked the previous day regarding the legal status of children born to couples who were not formally married, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 5 and 18 of the Convention. In addition, pointing out that the Family Code provided for the concept of parental authority being replaced by that of parental care, she questioned whether the two were in any way incompatible.

50. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS drew the Romanian delegation's attention to the provisions of the Convention under which children should not be separated from their parents, except in exceptional circumstances, and under which both parents had common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Her questions were prompted by her concern about the implementation of those provisions. First, given that there were few family planning centres and that there seemed to be little public knowledge either of their existence or of family planning itself, she asked what measures were being taken to raise public awareness. Secondly, she was extremely concerned at the high number of abandoned children, particularly of those abandoned by single mothers. The issue was, in fact, closely linked with her previous remark: if such women knew more about family planning, the second problem would not be so grave. The two issues should be considered jointly. Thirdly, she referred to a study put together by four high-ranking military officers, entitled Certaines causes socio-culturelles de la criminalité juvénile en Roumanie, in which the last of a long list of social and cultural causes of juvenile criminality was the fact that families did not take enough interest in their children and there was no intervention by public establishments specializing in the treatment of children with psychological difficulties or social behaviour problems. If that was the case, it was indeed very serious. It

also raised the question of whether placing young offenders aged 10 or over in re-education centres was the best solution to problems which were not of the child's own making but had external causes: the child was punished rather than treated. Fourthly, she was, like Mrs. Sardenberg, concerned at the possible implications of the bill concerning the legal declaration of abandonment, mentioned in paragraph 122 of the Romanian report. Despite its good intentions, there was a risk that it might encourage parents to abandon their children deliberately so as to make them available for adoption; and Romania already had enough problems with regard to adoption. Turning to the question of institutions in general, she recognized that solutions to the various problems affecting Romania's children could not be found overnight, but, in the light of article 3, para. 3 of the Convention, which provided that institutions responsible for the care or protection of children should conform with the standards established by competent authorities, she asked what system of controls existed to ensure that such provisions were respected. Lastly, referring to a Romanian reply which stated that judicial practices relating to adoption were not always consistent, she greatly regretted that some judges had approved inter-country adoptions without receiving authorization from the Romanian Adoption Committee (CRA), despite such authorization being required by law.

51. Mr. OPROIU (Romania) dealing first with Mrs. Sardenberg's concern with regard to the Family Code, said that only those parts of it which did not run counter to the new Romanian Constitution were applied. A new Family Code was in fact in the process of being drafted. As for the International Year of the Family, many activities were planned. Non-governmental organizations, the church and the Government itself all intended to emphasize the importance of the family unit. With regard to the forthcoming law on abandonment, he considered that the most important task was the proper definition of abandonment. Public attitudes could then be changed and communities encouraged to turn their face against the traffic in children. On Mr. Hammarberg's point regarding the status of women, he acknowledged that there was a problem of underrepresentation, although he added that there were some university professors and Secretaries of State who were women. As far as unemployment was concerned, he thought that both sexes unfortunately suffered equally, particularly in the age range 22-30. Abortion constituted a major problem; it had been prohibited under the previous regime in order to feed the paranoid desire of the former President to see an increase in the population. The Government was facing an uphill struggle to persuade people to use contraceptives, despite the fact that with the help of a loan from the World Bank over 10 million contraceptives had been imported. Regrettably, the promotion campaign was often impeded by doctors who found it more profitable to provide abortions than to prescribe contraceptives. At the heart of the Government's awareness campaign were the family planning centres, of which 236 had been set up, staffed by general practitioners as well as gynaecologists. Every effort was being made, through advertisements on television and in the press, to discourage abortion and promote contraception, but so far with minimal results. On the question of adoption, he considered that the Government was following the right approach: national adoption was encouraged and there were extremely clear criteria to be observed. Where intercountry adoption was concerned, the main difficulty lay in ascertaining whether foreign agencies had humanitarian or financial motives. In response to another question, he said that research into factors affecting children was

being actively encouraged. With regard to society's attitude to unmarried couples with children, he said it was a very delicate question. Their situation was treated with understanding and was not subject to any kind of sanction.

52. Mrs. LAUDATU (Romania) said that, in connection with the International Year of the Family, Romania had set up an institute for the protection for mothers and children, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. There was also a non-governmental institution, for the protection of families. Moreover, with the help of UNICEF, a major study on families was being carried out. UNICEF was also helping with the practical difficulties involved in formulating the law on abandonment, since there were no proper statistics, no methodology of applying the law and insufficient staff to monitor its implementation. Referring to reports that there were 100,000 children in institutions, she said that the actual figure was 50,000, which included both severely disabled children and those institutionalized for social reasons. The number of children who could really be said to have been abandoned was about 30,000, although the figures, estimated by foreign non-governmental organizations working in Romania, were fairly approximate. Romanians were encouraged to adopt, but they were often inhibited by their poor material circumstances. Unmarried mothers were often marginalized, but the problem involved was one of public attitudes, rather than legislation. With regard to re-education centres, she said that only those over 14 years of age were placed in such centres. Younger children were sent to one of two special schools, under the Ministry of Education, catering for 500 children, or to one of four re-education centres, run by the Ministry of Justice. She acknowledged that it was not a perfect solution. As for the shortage of social workers, there had been calls from every side - Parliament, non-governmental organizations, the church and parents - to redress the situation and her country fully intended to do so.

53. Mr. HAMMARBERG pointed out that there were no women ministers in the Government and that only 15 out of some 450 members of Parliament were women, a fact which might be symptomatic of a general problem regarding the status of women in Romanian society. He also felt that, since no woman undertook an abortion lightly, the fact that the incidence of abortion remained so high was a sign that much was still amiss.

54. Mr. MOMBESHORA asked, in connection with the shortage of social workers, whether it was open to the public to report cases of family abuse to the authorities and, if so, whether such reports would be followed up.

55. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that her concern about re-education centres related to the fact that, according to the report, children as young as 10 could be sent to them. Which ministry was responsible was immaterial; what mattered was that such young children were exposed to vice and immorality.

56. Mrs. LAUDATU (Romania) acknowledged that it was a source of concern to her country.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.